A Guide to Social Care for Children
Merton Council’s Children, Schools and Families Department is responsible for a range of services to children, young people and families. The council is committed to ensuring that all children in Merton have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

The council social care service responds to requests from children in need and their families. This booklet is a brief guide to how we work with children, young people, their families, relatives and carers.

It explains:

- Our main responsibilities for children in need
- How to get in touch with us
- What we can do to offer help and support
- How other organisations provide help.
In Merton, all agencies providing services to children use the Child and Young Person Concern Model, a system for ensuring we are all working together.

Our main responsibility is to promote and protect the well-being of children in need and their families. This means any child or young person whose health and welfare may suffer if they do not receive help.

We have responsibility for:

- Children and young people who may be at risk of harm or neglect or who may have been harmed
- Children and young people in trouble with the law
- Children and young people in care
- Children with disabilities.

Children and young people at risk of harm

If a child or young person appears to be in danger, or at risk of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse, we have a legal duty to look into the circumstances.

We will need to make sure that the child is safe, and this means making enquiries and asking questions. We may have to get involved within a family. Even if the family does not want us to get involved, there may be ways we can help.

Our involvement does not necessarily mean that the child will be separated from their family – this only happens in extreme cases or in emergencies. We recognise the uniqueness of family life, and we will always try to support parents in their responsibilities. Whatever the case, we will always keep people informed about what is happening. We will respond within 48 hours of receiving information and expect to agree a plan with the important people concerned with the child within 15 days.
If you think a child or young person may be at risk of harm you should telephone the Access and Assessment Team: 020 8545 4232 during office hours. Out of normal office hours you should telephone the Emergency Duty Social Work Service on 020 8770 5000. Alternatively, you can email: children@merton.gov.uk. More detailed information about how we protect children from abuse is contained in our leaflet titled Protecting Children, which is available from council offices.

Children and young people in care

Sometimes children and young people may not be able to live at home with their families or with other relatives. This can be for a number of reasons including illness, family breakdown, and parents or carers being unable to cope or provide the right sort of care and protection.

If this happens we try to find the child or young person somewhere else to live. We will work hard to make sure this is in or near Merton, and is within a family.

Fostering

The majority of children and young people we look after are placed with foster carers. Foster carers look after children on a temporary basis, until it is safe for them to return home. Occasionally, if it is not possible to return home we will work hard to find a new permanent family for them. To find out more about fostering and becoming a foster carer, read our fostering leaflet or telephone 020 8545 4285.
Adoption

Adoption is a legal arrangement when a child becomes a permanent member of a new family. Adoptions are always agreed by a Court and follow in-depth discussions with social workers, the prospective adopters, the birth family and the child themselves. To find out more about adoption read our adoption leaflet or telephone the Adoption Team on 020 8545 4688.

Disabled children

Disabled children may have physical impairments or learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments or a serious illness or medical condition. We work with our colleagues and partner agencies, such as education, health professionals and voluntary organisations to provide services for disabled children. Comprehensive information about these services is contained in the Directory of Services for Disabled Children, Young People and their Carers, which is available from the Children’s Information Service on 020 8545 3800.
Children and young people who are in trouble with the law

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) provides support and guidance for children and young people who are in trouble with the law, or at risk of getting in trouble. The team is made up of staff from Social Services, the Police, Probation, Education, Health and the voluntary sector. This means that we can access a range of services that enable children and young people to move away from crime. The Youth Justice Service also provides support services to parents and victims of youth crime. For more information about their work, telephone the Youth Justice Service on 020 8274 4949.

Young carers

Some children and young people care for a disabled parent or adult, and they may need help in sharing this responsibility or just have a break. We offer young carers a Carer’s Assessment, where we discuss the help they need. Carers are entitled to an assessment, even if the person they care for refuses outside help. Carers Support Merton is a local grant-aided organisation that provides a support service for young carers. For further information telephone Carers Support Merton on 020 8543 0347.

Family support

Services for children in need are also provided by the council’s Family Support Service. This service provides a wide range of support, including groups, for whole families and parents, including fathers. The service is provided at Bond Road Family Centre, and at the Phoenix Centre run by NCH Action for Children. To find out more about these services telephone the Access and Assessment Team on 020 8545 4232.
Helping us to help you

We welcome feedback about our services from the people who use them. If you have any comments, complaints or compliments about social services please contact:

Customer Service and Complaints Manager
Children Schools and Families Department
10th Floor
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden, SM4 5QZ

Tel: 020 8545 3263
Fax: 020 8545 3443
Email: childrensservicescomplaints@merton.gov.uk
Website: www.merton.gov.uk/complaints

You can request further copies of this leaflet by telephoning 020 8545 3263
If you would like more information in your own language, please contact us at the address shown in the box below.

Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresem e dhene ne kutine me poshte.

إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية للرجاء الاتصال بنا في العناوين المذكور ضمن الإطار أدناه.

হাদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় সত্ত্বে আরও তথ্য চান তাহলে তাকে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন, তালার বক্স সে আমাদের ঠিকানা রয়েছে।

如果你需要用中文印成的资料，
请按低端方格内提供的地址与我们联系。

أكرب مايل به اطلاعات بيشتر به زبان خود هستید، لطفاً ما از طریق ادرس زیرتماس بگیرید.

Pour tout renseignement complémentaire dans votre propre langue, veuillez nous contacter à l’adresse figurant dans l’encadré du bas.

Jeśli życzysz sobie Pan/i więcej informacji w swoim języku, proszę się z nami skontaktować pod adresem podanym w dolnej ramce.

чебал дармо интати виш дикт ва аст будеи гирги ғарме ве ған дилъон дарбе
чоб дилъон даре гирги ғарме ве ған дарье ған

Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.

Si usted desea más información en su propia lengua, por favor contáctenos en la dirección al pie del formato.

Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresem e dhene ne kutine me poshte.

Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.